

## Message Text

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66610  
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC  
TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK IMMEDIATE  
INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 044479

EXDIS TODEP 161

FOLLOWING REPEAT GUATEMALA 1279 ACTION SECSTATE 05 MAR

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 1279

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, GT  
SUBJECT: GUATEMALAN ELECTION CRISIS

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY KUBISCH FROM AMBASSADOR

1. GUATEMALA IS FACING ANOTHER CRISIS. THE ISSUE APPEARS TO BE WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT WILL HONOR THE WISHES OF A PLURALITY OF THE PEOPLE AS EXPRESSED IN LAST SUNDAY'S ELECTION OR INDULGE IN GROSS FRAUD TO SECURE THE VICTORY OF ITS CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENCY. THE DECISION, ALL AGREE, IS THAT OF PRESIDENT ARANA. THE INDICATIONS STRONGLY POINT TO THE SECOND COURSE OF ACTION.

2. YOU WILL RECALL THAT BEFORE I LEFT WASHINGTON IN JANUARY WE DISCUSSED THE DESIRABILITY, IN SPITE OF THE RISKS INVOLVED  
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AND OUR EXTREMELY LIMITED LEVERAGE, OF MY HAVING A TALK WITH PRESIDENT ARANA EARLY AFTER MY ARRIVAL TO EXPRESS OUR SATISFACTION WITH HIS ANNOUNCED DETERMINATION TO HOLD ELECTIONS, THUS STRENGTHENING THE TRADITION OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

IN GUATEMALA. OUR CONCERN THEN WAS LEST THE GOVERNMENT, FEARFUL OF LOSING TO THE OPPOSITION, WOULD ABORT THE ELECTIONS OR IN SOME FORM CARRY OUT A COUP TO PERPETUATE ITSELF IN OFFICE. IN THE WEEKS FOLLOWING MY ARRIVAL IT BECAME INCREASINGLY EVIDENT THAT THE GOVERNMENT, MASTERING ITS EARLIER FEARS, WAS MOVING STEADILY TOWARD ELECTIONS, WHICH, IN FACT, WERE HELD AS SCHEDULED ON MARCH 3. I THEREFORE DID NOT MAKE THE STRONG EFFORT WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN REQUIRED TO HAVE ARANA RECEIVE ME DURING HIS INTENSE ACTIVITY IN THE PRE-ELECTORAL PERIOD, RELYING UPON OUR FREQUENTLY EXPRESSED VIEW TO ALL CONCERNED THAT WE FAVORED FREE ELECTIONS AND THE ORDERLY AND PEACEFUL TRANSFER OF POWER TO THE WINNER TO CONVEY THE U.S. POINT OF VIEW. NOW A NEW PROBLEM PRESENTS ITSELF: THE APPARENT DENIAL OF VICTORY TO WHAT WE BELIEVE TO BE THE POPULAR CHOICE, WHO MAY NOT HAVE WON A MAJORITY VOTE BUT WHO PROBABLY WON AT LEAST A CLEAR PLURALITY IN A FAIRLY CONTESTED ELECTION.

3. I HAVE GIVEN LONG AND CAREFUL THOUGHT IN CONSULTATION WITH MY KEY COLLEAGUES AS TO WHAT CAN OR SHOULD BE DONE BY US AT THIS JUNCTURE, GIVEN OUR BELIEF THAT A STOLEN ELECTION IN GUATEMALA AND ITS CONSEQUENCES HERE WOULD NOT BE IN THE U.S. INTEREST. I WILL SPARE YOU A REHEARSAL OF THE VARIOUS COURSES OF ACTION AND CONSIDERATIONS WHICH HAVE GONE THROUGH OUR MINDS. MY CONCLUSIONS ARE:

(A) THE DECISION WILL BE MADE AND SOON, BY PRESIDENT ARANA AND EXCLUSIVELY IN THE LIGHT OF HOW HE PERCEIVES HIS OWN AND GUATEMALA'S INTERESTS;

(B) TO BE CONSIDERED AT ALL OUR VIEWS MUST BE CONVEYED IMMEDIATELY DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY BY SECURE MEANS TO ARANA, WHICH IN ITSELF POSES SEVERAL PROBLEMS;

(C) GIVEN THE EXTREME SENSITIVITY OF ARANA SUCH AN APPROACH COULD WELL BACKFIRE AND AT BEST WOULD CARRY LITTLE IF ANY WEIGHT AS HE CONSIDERS THE PROBLEM IN AN EMOTIONAL, PERSONAL AND PURELY GUATEMALAN CONTEXT, ESPECIALLY SINCE:  
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(D) OUR LEVERAGE IS APPROXIMATELY ZERO.

4. I BELIEVE THAT GREAT AS THE TEMPTATIONS ARE TO "DO SOMETHING" AND MUCH AS WE DISLIKE SEEING THE DIRECTION GUATEMALAN EVENTS APPEAR TO BE TAKING, THE MATURE COURSE OF ACTION IN THE U.S. BEST INTEREST IS TO REFRAIN FROM ACTION FOR ACTION'S SAKE WHILE CONTINUING AS APPROPRIATE OCCASION PRESENTS ITSELF TO MAKE CLEAR OUR WELL-KNOWN CONVICTION THAT THE PEACEFUL TRANSFER OF POWER TO THE WINNER OF FREE ELECTIONS IS IN THE BEST INTEREST OF ALL.  
MELOY UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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